

Message Text

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41

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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R 251340Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8814

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 4884

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR SOPN SY LE

SUBJ: LOCAL EDITOR ADMITS SYRIAN MEDIA HAVE FAILED TO JUSTIFY
SYRIAN INTERVENTION IN LEBANON TO SYRIAN PUBLIC

1. EMBOFF MET WITH EDITOR OF TISHRIIN NEWSPAPER, DR
GHASSAN RIFAI, JULY 20 AND WAS TOLD BY RIFAI THAT SYRIAN
MEDIA HAD FAILED IN ITS ATTEMPT -- UNDERTAKEN UPON
INSTRUCTIONS OF REGIME -- TO EXPLAIN AND JUSTIFY SYRIAN
INTERVENTION IN LEBANON TO WHAT RIFAI DESCRIBED AS SYRIA'S
"SILENT MAJORITY". ACCORDING TO RIFAI, SYRIAN PUBLIC
BELIEVES INFORMATION DISSEMINATED BY MEDIA IS FALSE AND
THAT SYRIAN ROLE IN LEBANON HAS BEEN TRAITOROUS. PUBLIC
DOES NOT SUPPORT ACTIONS AGAINST PALESTINIANS. RIFAI
COMMENTED THAT REGIME HAD FALLEN VICTIM TO ITS OWN SLOGANS
WHICH OVER THE YEARS HAVE CREATED MYTH OF SYRO-PALESTINIAN
SOLIDARITY.

2. COMMENT: RIFAI'S ASSERTION OF CREDIBILITY GAP
BETWEEN SARG AND SYRIAN PUBLIC CONCERNING SYRIA'S ROLE
IN LEBANON -- WHICH SYRIAN MEDIA UNABLE TO BRIDGE --
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ACCORDS WITH OUR PERCEPTIONS OF PUBLIC REACTION TO

MEDIA CAMPAIGN. A PRINCIPAL AIM OF ASAD'S JULY 20
SPEECH WAS UNDOUBTEDLY TO TRY TO RESTORE SOME MEASURE
OF PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN HIS CONDUCT OF LEBANESE POLICY.
PELLETREAU

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NNN

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